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(11) EP 0 958 801 A1

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
24.11.1999 Bulletin 1999/47

(51) Int Cl.⁶ A61F 13/15

(21) Application number: 99303652.4

(22) Date of filing: 11.05.1999

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

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(30) Priority: 12.05.1998 JP 12866598

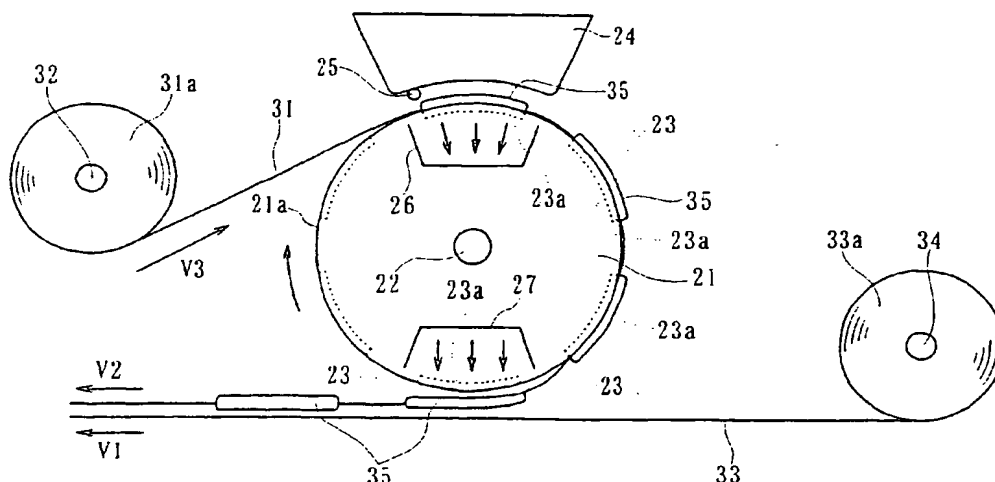
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(54) Production method of absorbent body

(57) A production method of an absorbent body is provided. The method includes the steps of: supplying a first cover sheet (31) on an outer surface of a rotating pattern drum (21), said pattern drum (21) being provided with a concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof; adapting the first cover sheet (31) to the shape of the concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the concavity to form an absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the concavity on the first cover sheet (31); supplying a second cover sheet (33) toward the outer surface of the pattern drum

(21); and separating the first cover sheet (31) together with the absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the pattern drum (21) and superposing the first cover sheet (31) together with the absorbent material layer on the second cover sheet (33) to produce an absorbent body comprised of the first cover sheet (31), the second cover sheet (33) and the absorbent material layer interposed between the first cover sheet (31) and the second cover sheet (33). The absorbent body produced by this method has improved absorption properties and may be used for disposable diapers, pet sheets, sanitary napkins or the like.

Fig. 1



Description

[0001] This invention relates to a production method of an absorbent body to be used for pet sheets, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, or the like.

[0002] Conventional production methods of the absorbent body are explained with reference to Fig. 13 and Fig. 14.

[0003] In the conventional production method of the absorbent body shown in Fig. 13, a carrier tissue 2 is drawn from a roll 2a which is supported by an axis 1 and is forwarded continuously. A pulp supplier 3 is provided above the carrier tissue 2 which is forwarded continuously. Crushed pulps are supplied from the pulp supplier 3 to be poured on the carrier tissue 2. A supply nozzle 4 for supplying particulate SAP (super-absorbent polymers) is provided above the carrier tissue 2 and supplies the SAP on the carrier tissue 2 which is forwarded continuously.

[0004] A suction chamber 6 is provided in the opposite side of the pulp supplier 3 and the supply nozzle 4 with the carrier tissue 2 interposed. Crushed pulps and the SAP are sucked by the suction chamber 6 to form a strip of an absorbent material layer 5 comprised of a mixture of crushed pulps and SAP on the carrier tissue 2.

[0005] In a speedy production, crushed pulps and SAP are continuously supplied onto the carrier tissue 2 to form a strip of an absorbent material layer 5. Thereafter, a cover tissue (not shown) is supplied onto the strip of the absorbent material layer 5 to form a laminated body comprised of the carrier tissue 2, a cover tissue and the absorbent material layer 5 interposed between the tissues. Subsequently, both sides of the laminated body are cut by a cutter such as a rotary cutter and thereafter the laminated body is cut into individual absorbent bodies.

[0006] In the conventional production method of the absorbent body shown in Fig. 14, the carrier tissue 2 drawn from the roll 2a are forwarded continuously. A circular pattern drum 7 is provided above the carrier tissue 2 which is forwarded continuously. The pattern drum 7 rotates in the clockwise direction around the axis 8 at a speed adapted to the running speed of the carrier tissue 2.

[0007] Concavities 9 are provided on the outer face of the pattern drum 7 at predetermined intervals. Mesh 9a of a predetermined screen dimension is provided at the bottom of the concavity 9. The concavity 9 is formed in a predetermined shape such as the shape of a sand-glass. A pulp supplier 11 is provided above the pattern drum 7, facing the outer surface of the pattern drum 7. Likewise, a supply nozzle 12 for supplying SAP is provided also facing the outer surface of the pattern drum 7.

[0008] According to the production method of the absorbent body as shown in Fig. 14, crushed pulps are supplied from the pulp supplier 11 into the concavity 9 which is provided on the outer surface of the rotating pattern drum 7. Also, SAP are supplied from the nozzle

12 into the concavity 9 in the same manner.

[0009] A suction means is provided inside of the pattern drum 7 facing the pulp supplier 11 and the supply nozzle 12 for sucking air through the openings of the mesh 9a provided at the bottom of the concavity 9. The crushed pulps and the particulate SAP are sucked to be placed onto the concavity 9 thereby forming the absorbent material layer 13 having the same shape as that of the concavity 9.

[0010] At the time the concavity 9 faces the carrier tissue 2 in the course of the rotation of the pattern drum 7, another suction means provided below the carrier tissue 2 sucks air through the carrier tissue 2. By this suction, the absorbent material layer 13 is transferred onto the carrier tissue 2. Subsequently, a cover tissue (not shown) is laid along the carrier tissue 2 and the absorbent material layer 13, thereby forming a laminated body comprised of the carrier tissue 2, the cover tissue and the absorbent material layer 13 interposed between the tissues. Thereafter, the carrier tissue 2 and the cover tissue are cut in accordance with the shape of the absorbent material layer 13 to produce individual absorbent bodies.

[0011] In a high speed production of the absorbent body according to the conventional production method shown in Fig. 13, because the absorbent material layer 5 is formed in a strip shape on the carrier tissue 2 in a continuous process, a rectangular absorbent body can be easily produced. However, it is almost impossible to produce an absorbent body having a desired shape such as sand-glass shape. Therefore, in order to produce an absorbent body having a desired shape such as sand-glass shape, it is necessary to conduct a trimming process to such laminated body in a press working process. That results in taking many processing steps.

[0012] In addition, in order to laminate another absorbent material layer on the absorbent material layer 5 formed by the conventional production method shown in Fig. 13, crushed pulps and SAP need to be sucked by the suction means through the carrier tissue 2 and the absorbent material layer 5. However, because of the poor air permeability of the laminated layers formed of the carrier tissue 2 and the absorbent material 5, it is almost impossible to form another absorbent material layer over such laminated body by sucking another crushed pulps or SAP by such suction means. For this reason, in the production of the absorbent body having two absorbent material layers laminated, each of the absorbent material layers needs to be produced separately by the method shown in Fig. 13 and thereafter laminated each other. Therefore, it inevitably takes many production steps to produce an absorbent body having two absorbent material layers therein.

[0013] Moreover, in order to cut the above absorbent body having two laminated absorbent material layers therein, another cover tissue needs to be laid over the absorbent material layer at the upper side. Consequently, at least three tissue layers are needed, making the

production of the absorbent body costly.

[0014] On the other hand, according to the conventional production method of the absorbent body shown in Fig. 14, the absorbent material layer 13 can be formed in the same shape as that of the concavity 9 formed on the outer face of the pattern drum 7.

[0015] However, in order to form the absorbent material layer 13 in the same shape as that of the concavity 9, crushed pulps and particulate SAP need to be sucked into the concavity 9 by the suction force through the openings of the mesh 9a provided at the bottom of the concavity 9. In general, the opening size of the mesh 9a is 60 meshes (according to the standard of Tyler, U.S. A., the opening size of such mesh is equal to 0.246mm).

[0016] However, because of the fineness of the SAP supplied to the concavity 9, they easily pass into inside of the pattern drum 7 through the mesh 9a, thereby rendering the yield ratio of SAP very poor. Owing to the passage of SAP through the mesh 9a which results in a poor yield ratio of SAP, it is very difficult to increase the content of SAP in the absorbent layer 13. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to produce an absorbent layer containing SAP 20% by weight or more.

[0017] Further, in order to accelerate the liquid absorption speed of the absorbent material layer, the particle size of SAP to be contained in the absorbent material layer must be formed very small. However, the mesh 9a having the opening size of 60 meshes can hardly prevent such fine SAP from passing through into the pattern drum 7. Therefore, it is almost impossible for the mesh 9a to hold the SAP having a small particle size such as 100 mesh or less (which passes through a mesh having an opening size of 0.147mm) at the concavity 9.

[0018] In addition, according to the conventional production method shown in Fig. 14, the absorbent material layer 13 must be sucked through the carrier tissue 2 by the suction means provided below the carrier tissue 2 at the time the concavity 9 faces the carrier tissue 2. However, in order to suck the absorbent material layer formed in the concavity 9 through the carrier tissue 2, a very strong suction force is needed. Consequently, the facility of the suction means inevitably becomes large, making the production cost very high.

[0019] Further, according to the conventional production method as shown in Fig. 14, it is very difficult to produce an absorbent body having two absorbent material layers laminated each other therein. Because sucking another absorbent material layer to place it on the absorbent body through the carrier tissue 2 and the absorbent material layer 13 by a suction means is almost impossible owing to the poor air permeability of the layers. Therefore, in order to produce an absorbent body having two absorbent material layers laminated therein, each of the absorbent material layer must be produced separately and thereafter laminated each other like in the production method shown in Fig. 13. Consequently, the number of steps for producing the absorbent body having two absorbent material layers lam-

inated with each other therein is inevitably increased.

[0020] Also, similar to the production method shown in Fig. 13, in order to cut the above absorbent body having two laminated absorbent material layers therein, another cover tissue needs to be laid over the absorbent material layer at the upper side. As a result, at least three tissue layers become necessary, making the production of the absorbent body costly.

[0021] It is an object of the present invention to provide a production method of an absorbent body which can solve above problems by easily transferring the absorbent material layer formed in the concavity of the pattern drum onto the cover sheet without using a large scaled suction means of the conventional technology.

[0022] It is a further object of the present invention to improve the yield ratio of SAP to be contained in the absorbent material layer, thereby achieving the formation of an absorbent body containing an increased amount of SAP or fine SAP.

[0023] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a production method of an absorbent body which can laminate a plurality of absorbent material layers without using a cover sheet between the laminated absorbent material layers.

[0024] It is a further object of the present invention to produce an absorbent body by laminating a plurality of absorbent material layers wherein each layer may have different shapes, different SAP contents or the SAP having different particle sizes.

[0025] In order to achieve the above objects, the production method of the present invention comprises the following steps of:

- (1) supplying a first cover sheet on an outer surface of a rotating pattern drum, said pattern drum being provided with a concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof;
- (2) adapting the first cover sheet to the shape of the concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the concavity to form an absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the concavity on the first cover sheet;
- (3) supplying a second cover sheet toward the outer surface of the pattern drum; and
- (4) separating the first cover sheet together with the absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the pattern drum and superposing the first cover sheet together with the absorbent material layer on the second cover sheet to produce an absorbent body comprised of the first cover sheet, the second cover sheet and the absorbent material layer interposed between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

[0026] In this production method, it is also possible that another absorbent material layer is formed on the second cover sheet, and the absorbent material layer formed on the first cover sheet is superposed on the ab-

sorbent material layer formed on the second cover sheet, between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

[0027] Another production method of the absorbent body according to the present invention comprises the following steps of:

- (1) supplying a first cover sheet on an outer surface of a first pattern drum rotating, said first pattern drum being provided with a first concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof;
- (2) adapting the first cover sheet to the shape of the first concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the first concavity to form a first absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the first concavity on the first cover sheet;
- (3) supplying a second cover sheet on the outer surface of a second pattern drum rotating, said second pattern drum being provided with a second concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof;
- (4) adapting the second cover sheet to the shape of the second concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the second concavity to form a second absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the second concavity on the second cover sheet; and
- (5) separating the first cover sheet together with the first absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the first pattern drum and separating the second cover sheet together with the second absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the second pattern drum and superposing the first cover sheet together with the first absorbent material layer on the second cover sheet together with the second absorbent material layer to produce an absorbent body comprised of the first cover sheet, the second cover sheet and the first and second absorbent material layers interposed between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

[0028] Embodiments of the present invention, will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings, in which:

[0029] Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of the production method of the absorbent body showing the first embodiment of the present invention.

[0030] Fig. 2 is a schematic diagram of the production method of the absorbent body showing the second embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] Fig. 3 is a schematic diagram of the production method of the absorbent body showing the third embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] Fig. 4 is a partial perspective view of the outer surface of the pattern drum of the present invention.

[0033] Fig. 5 is a partial sectional view of the pattern

drum showing the state of absorbent material layer formed on the outer surface thereof.

[0034] Fig. 6(A) is a sectional view of the absorbent body produced according to the production method of the present invention.

[0035] Fig. 6(B) is a sectional view of the absorbent body produced according to the production method of the present invention.

[0036] Fig. 6(C) is a sectional view of the absorbent body produced according to the production method of the present invention.

[0037] Fig. 6(D) is a sectional view of the absorbent body produced according to the production method of the present invention.

[0038] Fig. 7 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 2.

[0039] Fig. 8 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 3.

[0040] Fig. 9 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 3.

[0041] Fig. 10 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 3.

[0042] Fig. 11 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 3.

[0043] Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the absorbent material layer produced according to the production method of the present invention as shown in Fig. 3.

[0044] Fig. 13 is a schematic diagram showing the conventional production method of the absorbent body.

[0045] Fig. 14 is a schematic diagram showing the conventional production method of the absorbent body.

[0046] Fig. 1 is an explanatory diagram showing the first embodiment of the present invention.

[0047] According to the production method of the absorbent body shown in Fig. 1, an absorbent body comprising a single absorbent material layer held between two cover sheets is produced.

[0048] A pattern drum 21 is continuously rotated around an axis 22 in the clockwise direction at a certain rotating speed. As shown in Fig. 4, concavities 23 are formed on an outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21 by predetermined intervals. The shape of the concavity 23 is like a sand-glass. Mesh 23a are formed at the bottom of the concavity 23 having a screen of 60 meshes (having an opening of 0.246mm) according to the standard of Tyler, U.S.A.

[0049] As shown in Fig. 1, a pulp supplier 24 for supplying absorbent fibers such as crushed pulps and a supply nozzle 25 for supplying particulate SAP (super-absorbent polymers) are provided above the pattern drum 21, facing the outer surface 21a thereof. The relative position between the supply nozzle 25 and the pulp supplier 24 can be determined appropriately depending

on the desired position of supplying the SAP to the crushed pulps.

[0050] The SAP can be made of polyacrylic acid, sodium polyacrylate, polyacrylamide, polyacrylonitrile, polyvinyl alcohol, an additional polymer of maleic anhydride, a polyether, a condensed polymer, a polysaccharide such as starch or cellulose, a protein such as collagen, or the like. Examples of the SAPs include: a cross-linked compound of sodium polyacrylate, a graft copolymer of starch having sodium polyacrylate or a graft copolymer of cellulose having polyacrylonitrile chains.

[0051] A suction chamber 26 is provided inside the pattern drum 21, facing the pulp supplier 24 and the supply nozzle 25. Also, a pressure chamber 27 is provided inside the pattern drum 21, facing the inside face of the concavity 23 which is moved to the bottom of the pattern drum 21. The suction chamber 26 sucks the air through the mesh 23a of the concavity 23 when the concavity 23 is moved to the top position. The pressure chamber 27 pressures the air through the mesh 23a of the concavity 23 when the concavity 23 is moved to the bottom position.

[0052] A cover tissue 31 which becomes a first cover sheet of the absorbent body is drawn from a roll 31a rotating around an axis 32, wound around the outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21 and thereafter forwarded to the left as shown in Fig. 1. A carrier tissue 33 which becomes a second cover sheet of the absorbent body is drawn from a roll 33a rotating around an axis 34 and thereafter forwarded continuously to the left at a certain speed as shown in Fig. 1.

[0053] The carrier tissue 33 is forwarded at the speed of V1 by the force of a conveyor (not shown) being proceeded by the rotation of conveyor rolls provided at the left of the pattern drum 21. The cover tissue 31 is forwarded to the left at the speed of V2, after going around the outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21. The speed V1 and V2 are set equal to each other.

[0054] As shown in Fig. 5, the cover tissue 31 drawn from the roll 31a is laid along (or adapted to) the inner surface of the concavity 23 to form a concave shape and thereafter goes around in the clockwise direction together with the outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21. The rotating speed of the outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21 is set almost equal to the forwarding speed V1 of the carrier tissue 33. However, since the cover tissue 31 is laid along the inner surface of the concavity 23, the speed V3 of drawing out the cover tissue 31 from the roll 31a is set slightly faster than the speed V1 or V2.

[0055] Next, the production method of the absorbent body shown in Fig. 1 is explained in detail.

[0056] The pattern drum 21 is rotated in the clockwise direction at a certain speed, and the cover tissue 31 which becomes the first cover sheet of the absorbent body is supplied to the outer surface 21a of the pattern drum 21. When the concavity 23 is moved to the top of the pattern drum 21 (i.e., above the suction chamber

26), the sucking force of the suction chamber 26 is applied to the cover tissue 31 through the mesh 23a, and thereby the cover tissue 31 is laid along the surface of the concavity 23 to be deformed in a concave shape.

[0057] At this timing, the crushed pulps are supplied into the concavity 23 by the pulp supplier 24 and the particulate SAP are supplied into the concavity 23 from the supply nozzle 25. The crushed pulps and the SAP are sucked into the concavity 23 through the mesh 23a and the cover tissue 31. Consequently, the cover tissue 31 is laid along the inner surface of the mesh 23a in the concavity 23 and thereby the absorbent material layer 35 comprised of a mixture of the crushed pulps and the SAP is formed on the cover tissue 31 as shown in Fig. 5. The shape of this absorbent material layer 35 is the same as the shape of the concavity 23 opening upward. Thus, in the case of using the pattern drum 21 shown in Fig. 4, the shape of this absorbent material layer 35 can be formed in a sand-glass shape. By setting up the relative position of the supply nozzle 25 and the pulp supplier 24 as shown in Fig. 1, the content of SAP in the absorbent material layer 35 can be arranged such that more of the SAP exist at the position proximate to the cover tissue 31.

[0058] On the other hand, the carrier tissue 33 is supplied from the roll 33a and is forwarded toward underneath the pattern drum 21. When the concavity 23 is moved to the bottom of the pattern drum 21 and faced the carrier tissue 33, the absorbent material layer 35 and the cover tissue 31 are separated from the concavity 23 by the pressure chamber 27. Thus the absorbent material layer 35 is transferred to the carrier tissue 33 together with the cover tissue 31. In this process, an air pressure force is applied to the cover tissue 31 by the pressure chamber 27 to push out the absorbent material layer 35 and the cover tissue 31 from the concavity 23 of the pattern drum 21. Incidentally, although it is preferable to push out the absorbent material layer 35 and the cover tissue 31 by the pressure chamber 27, the absorbent material layer 35 may be separated from the concavity 23 by applying some other force to the cover tissue 31 in the direction of the carrier tissue 33.

[0059] As a result, a laminated body comprising the carrier tissue 33 and the cover tissue 31 having the absorbent material layers 35 at predetermined intervals between them is produced. By cutting this laminated body in a predetermined dimension at a position between adjacent absorbent material layers 35 by a cutter such as a rotary cutter, the individual absorbent bodies are produced.

[0060] In the production of this laminated body (absorbent body), a hot melt type adhesive can be applied between the absorbent material layer 35 and the cover tissue 31 and/or between the absorbent material layer 35 and the carrier tissue 33. Also, the cover tissue 31 and the carrier tissue 33 can be adhered with each other at the peripheral of the absorbent material layer 35.

[0061] According to the production method described

above, because the cover tissue **31** is laid on the mesh **23a** at the bottom of the concavity **23** of the pattern drum **21** and the crushed pulps and the particulate SAP are supplied thereon, the particulate SAP do not pass into inside of the pattern drum **21** through the screen of mesh **23a**, thereby improving the yield ratio of SAP. Also, since the SAP content in the absorbent material layer **35** can be increased, water retention property of the absorbent material layer **35** can be improved. Further, since the SAP are prevented from passing through the screen of mesh **23a**, the SAP content in the absorbent material layer **35** can be freely determined and the scattering of the SAP content among the absorbent bodies can be decreased. Moreover, since the SAP having a small particle size of 100 mesh or less (which pass through a screen having an opening of 0.147mm) or 200 mesh or less (which pass through a screen having an opening of 0.074mm) can be introduced into the absorbent material layer **35**, liquid absorption speed of the absorbent material layer **35** can be accelerated.

[0062] According to the production method of the present invention, the SAP having the particle size in the range of 60mesh-200mesh can be introduced into the absorbent material layer **35** in the range of 20%-90% by weight. It is even possible to mix the SAP having smaller particle size than 200mesh into the absorbent material layer **35**.

[0063] In the production method shown in **Fig. 1**, it is possible to supply only crushed pulps without supplying SAP to form the absorbent material layer **35**. Even in this case, since the absorbent material layer **35** can be separated from the concavity **23** together with the cover tissue **31** laid along the concavity **23**, the absorbent material layer **35** can be easily removed from the concavity **23**.

[0064] **Fig. 2** is an explanatory drawing showing the second production method of the absorbent body of the present invention.

[0065] In the production method shown in **Fig. 2**, another pulp supplier **36** is provided above the carrier tissue **33** which is drawn from the roll **33a** to become the second cover sheet. Undereath the pulp supplier **36**, another suction chamber **37** is provided facing the pulp supplier **36** with the carrier tissue **33** interposed between them. Incidentally, hereinafter, the members and means having the same structure as in **Fig. 1** are indicated by using the same reference numbers. Therefore, the pattern drum **21**, the cover tissue **31** which becomes the first cover sheet of the absorbent body by being supplied to the outer surface **21a** of the pattern drum **21**, the pulp supplier **24** and the supply nozzle **25**, all shown in **Fig. 2**, are the same as those shown in **Fig. 1**.

[0066] According to the production method shown in **Fig. 2**, the carrier tissue **33** which becomes the second cover sheet of the absorbent body is drawn from the roll **33a** and forwarded continuously at a certain speed **V1**. Crushed pulps are supplied on the carrier tissue **33** from the pulp supplier **36**. These crushed pulps are sucked

to the carrier tissue **33** by the air suction force generated by the suction chamber **37** to form another absorbent material layer **40** in a continuous strip shape on the carrier tissue **33**.

[0067] Like the production method shown in **Fig. 1**, at the time the absorbent material layer **40** and the carrier tissue **33** are reached underneath the pattern drum **21**, the absorbent material layer **35** formed at the concavity **23** of the pattern drum **21** is separated from the concavity **23** together with the cover tissue **31** to be laid on the absorbent material layer **40**. By this process, a double layered absorbent material can be formed between the carrier tissue **33** and the cover tissue **31**. Consequently, a laminated body, comprised of the carrier tissue **33** and cover tissue **31** with the absorbent material having a double layered structure interposed between them, can be produced. By cutting this laminated body by a cutter such as a rotary cutter in a predetermined dimension, the individual absorbent bodies are produced.

[0068] The absorbent material layer **35** and the cover tissue **31** can be adhered with each other by using a hot melt type adhesive. Also, the absorbent material layer **40** and the carrier tissue **33** can be adhered with each other by using the same type of adhesive. Further, the cover tissue **31** and the carrier tissue **33** can be adhered with each other at the peripheral of the double layered absorbent material formed of the absorbent material layer **35** and the absorbent material layer **40**.

[0069] According to the production method shown in **Fig. 2**, since no tissue is necessary between the absorbent material layer **40** and the absorbent material layer **35**, an absorbent body having an absorbent material layer of a double layer structure can be produced at low cost.

[0070] According to the production method shown in **Fig. 2**, further, SAP can be introduced only into the absorbent material layer **35** while introducing no SAP into the absorbent material layer **40**. Or else, the absorbent material layer **40** also can be formed of the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP by installing another supply nozzle of SAP with the pulp supplier **36**. In this case, at forming the absorbent material layer **35** and the absorbent material layer **40** each from the mixture of crushed pulp and SAP, it is possible to make the contents and particle sizes of the SAP different between the absorbent material layer **35** and the absorbent material layer **40**.

[0071] Alternatively, it is also possible that the absorbent material layer **35** is formed of crushed pulps alone while the absorbent material layer **40** is formed of the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP.

[0072] **Fig. 3** is an explanatory drawing showing the third production method of the absorbent body of the present invention.

[0073] In this production method, a first pattern drum **21A** and a second pattern drum **21B**, which have the same structure as that of the pattern drum **21** shown in **Figs. 1, 2, 4 and 5**, are provided in parallel. The first pattern drum **21A** is continuously rotating in the clock-

wise direction, and the second pattern drum 21B is continuously rotating in the counterclockwise direction both at the same speed. Also similar to the pattern drum 21, concavities 23A and concavities 23B, the bottoms of which are formed as mesh having a screen of 60 meshes, are provided on the outer surface of the pattern drum 21A and on the outer surface of the pattern drum 21B respectively. The concavity 23A and the concavity 23B may be formed in the same or different shapes.

[0074] A pulp supplier 24A and a supply nozzle 25A for SAP are provided above the pattern drum 21A and a suction chamber 26A is provided inside the pattern drum 21A. Similarly, a pulp supplier 24B and a supply nozzle 25B for SAP are provided above the pattern drum 21B and a suction chamber 26B is provided inside the pattern drum 21B.

[0075] A pressure chamber 27A and a pressure chamber 27B are provided inside the pattern drum 21A and the pattern drum 21B respectively. The pressure chambers 27A and 27B are facing each other at the position where the outer surfaces of the pattern drum 21A and the pattern drum 21B are facing each other with the cover tissues 31A and 31B interposed between them.

[0076] According to the production method of the absorbent body as shown in Fig. 3, the cover tissue 31A is supplied to the outer surface of the first pattern drum 21A and laid along the inside of the concavity 23A. Crushed pulps and SAP are supplied from the pulp supplier 24A and supply nozzle 25A respectively into the concavity 23A to form a first absorbent layer 35A comprised of a mixture of crushed pulps and SAP on the cover tissue 31A, the shape of which is the same as that of the concavity 23A. Also, the cover tissue 31B is supplied to the outer surface of the second pattern drum 21B. This cover tissue 31B is laid along the inside of the concavity 23B of the second pattern drum 21B. Crushed pulps and SAP are supplied from the pulp supplier 24B and the supply nozzle 25B respectively to form a second absorbent material layer 35B, the shape of which is the same as that of the concavity 23B.

[0077] At the position where the outer surfaces of the pattern drum 21A and the pattern drum 21B face each other with the cover tissue 31A and 31B interposed between them, the cover tissue 31A is separated from the concavity 23A together with the absorbent material layer 35A by the pressure chamber 27A, and the cover tissue 31B is separated from the concavity 23B together with the absorbent material layer 35B by the pressure chamber 27B. Thereafter, the absorbent material layer 35A and the absorbent material layer 35B are superposed with each other to have a double layer structure, between the cover tissue 31A and the cover tissue 31B, thereby forming a laminated body.

[0078] Subsequently, such laminated body is cut into pieces in a predetermined dimension to produce the individual absorbent bodies.

[0079] The absorbent material layer 35A and the cover tissue 31A can be adhered each other by using a hot

melt type adhesive. Also, the absorbent material layer 35B and the cover tissue 31B can be adhered each other by using the same type of adhesive. It is also possible that the cover tissue 31A and the cover tissue 31B are adhered each other at the peripheral of the absorbent material having a double layer structure formed of the absorbent material layer 35A and the absorbent material layer 35B.

[0080] In this production method, since no tissue is necessary between the absorbent material layer 35A and the absorbent material layer 35B, an absorbent body having double layered absorbent material structure can be produced at low cost.

[0081] Further, SAP can be introduced only into either one of the absorbent material layer 35A or the absorbent material layer 35B. Also, it is possible to make the contents and particle sizes of the SAP different between the absorbent material layer 35A and the absorbent material layer 35B.

[0082] Furthermore, instead of laminating (or superposing) the absorbent material layers 35A and 35B, it is also possible to combine (or mate) the absorbent material layers 35A and 35B adjacent each other in a horizontal plane to form a single-flat layered structure between the cover tissues 31A and 31B as explained below (with reference to Fig. 10 - 12).

[0083] Next, the structure of the absorbent bodies produced according to the above described production methods is explained.

[0084] Fig. 6(A) shows the absorbent body produced according to the production method shown in Fig. 1. This absorbent body is comprised of the carrier tissue 33 and the cover tissue 31 with the absorbent material layer 35 interposed between them. The absorbent material layer 35 is formed of crushed pulps or the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP.

[0085] Fig. 6(B) shows the absorbent body produced according to the production method shown in Fig. 2 or Fig. 3.

[0086] In the production method shown in Fig. 2, the absorbent material layer 40 and the absorbent material layer 35 formed in the concavity 23 of the pattern drum 21 are laminated each other and such laminated layers are held between the carrier tissue 33 and the cover tissue 31.

[0087] One example of the shape of the laminated layers according to the production method shown in Fig. 2 is illustrated in Fig. 7. The absorbent material layer 35 in a rectangular framework shape is laminated on the absorbent material layer 40. This absorbent material layer 35 in a rectangular framework shape can be formed by forming the concavity 23 of the pattern drum 21 in a rectangular framework shape.

[0088] The absorbent body having the laminated layers shown in Fig. 7 may be used for an excrement absorption sheet for pets, or the like, which can be produced by providing a liquid non-permeable backing sheet at the bottom of the absorbent body and a liquid

permeable top sheet on the top of the same. The absorbent material layer 40 is formed of crushed pulps alone or the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP, and the absorbent material layer 35 in a rectangular framework shape is formed of the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP. In this case, it is desirable that the absorbent material layer 35 contains more and/or finer SAP than the absorbent material layer 40. The SAP contained in the absorbent material layer 35 preferably have a particle size below 60 mesh, more preferably below 100 mesh, and the SAP content in the absorbent material layer 35 is 20% by weight or more, preferably 30% by weight or more, and more preferably, in the range of 50% -90% by weight. In such structure, the absorption sheet can prevent the urine excrement from leaking outside because the absorbent material layer 35 in a rectangular framework shape absorbs the urine excreted on the absorbent material layer 40 very quickly.

[0089] Incidentally, although one of the advantages of the production method shown in Fig. 2 is that no tissue is necessary between the absorbent material layer 40 and the absorbent material layer 35, it is preferable for the excrement absorption sheet for pets that the area surrounded by the absorbent material layer 35 is colored. Therefore, in the production method shown in Fig. 2, a colored tissue 51 may be supplied on the absorbent material layer 40 such that the colored tissue 51 is placed between the absorbent material layer 40 and the absorbent material layer 35 as shown in Fig. 6(D), if the absorbent body is used for the excrement absorption sheet for pets. In this case, the colored tissue 51 at the area surrounded by the framework shaped absorbent material layer 35 can be seen from outside through the cover tissue 31 and the top sheet.

[0090] The structure of the absorbent body produced according to the production method shown in Fig. 3 is such that the absorbent material layer 35B formed at the concavity 23B is placed on the cover tissue 31B and the absorbent material layer 35A formed at the concavity 23A is laminated on the absorbent material layer 35B and the cover tissue 31A covers the top face thereof, as shown in Fig. 6(B). In this production method shown in Fig. 3, both the absorbent material layers 35A and 35B can be formed in any desired shapes.

[0091] Fig. 8 and Fig. 9 each show an example of the shape formed by the absorbent material layer 35B and the absorbent material layer 35A in the absorbent body produced according to the production method as shown in Fig. 3.

[0092] In Fig. 8, the absorbent material layer 35A and the absorbent material layer 35B are both formed in a sand-glass shape having the same dimensions. This combination of absorbent material layers can be made by forming the concavity 23A of the first pattern drum 21A and the concavity 23B of the second pattern drum 21B in the same sand-glass shape and size.

[0093] In Fig. 9, the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side is in a sand-glass shape and the absorb-

ent material layer 35B at the lower side is in a rectangular shape. The absorbent material layer 35B at the lower side is attached to the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side only at the central portion in the transversal direction.

[0094] The absorbent bodies having such layers 35A and 35B as shown in Figs. 8 and 9 can be used for a disposable diaper, sanitary napkin, urine absorption pad or the like, which can be produced by providing a liquid non-permeable backing sheet at the bottom of the absorbent body, and a liquid permeable top sheet at the top thereof.

[0095] In those absorbent bodies shown in Figs. 8 and 9, the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side is comprised of crushed pulps alone or the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP, and the absorbent material layer 35B at the lower side is comprised of the mixture of the crushed pulps and SAP. In this case, it is desirable that the absorbent material layer 35B at the lower side contains more and/or finer SAP than the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side. The SAP contained in the absorbent material layer 35B preferably have a particle size below 60 mesh, more preferably below 100 mesh, and the SAP content in the absorbent material layer 35B is 20% by weight or more, preferably 30% by weight or more, and more preferably, in the range of 50% -90% by weight. In such structure, the excrement or secretion liquid introduced to the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side is moved toward the absorbent material layer 35B at the lower side owing to the strong absorption ability of the more and/or finer SAP contained in the absorbent material layer 35B, before the excrement or secretion liquid spreads all over the absorbent material layer 35A at the upper side. Therefore, the excrement or secretion liquid is prevented from flowing back to the top sheet. In the absorbent body having such structure as shown in Fig. 9, further, since the excrement or secretion liquid introduced to the central portion of the absorbent material layer 35A at upper side is strongly absorbed by the more and/or finer SAP contained in the absorbent layer 35B at the lower side, it can prevent the excrement or secretion liquid not only from flowing back to the top sheet but also from leaking to the side of the absorbent material layer 35A.

[0096] Incidentally, by modifying the production method shown in Fig. 3, an absorbent body having such a three layered absorbent material as shown in Fig. 6(C) can be produced. That is, by providing and laminating another absorbent material layer 52 formed on another cover tissue 53 onto the laminated body produced by the production method shown in Fig. 3, the absorbent body having a three layered absorbent material can be produced.

[0097] Further, in the production method shown in Fig. 3, it is also possible to mate (or combine) the absorbent material layers 35A and 35B with each other to form a flat absorbent material layer as shown in Figs. 10-12 between the cover tissues 31A and 31B, instead

of laminating them with each other. In this case, the absorbent material layers **35A** and **35B** have different absorption properties from each other, so that the resulting flat absorbent material layer has partially different absorption property.

[0098] In **Fig. 10**, the absorbent material layer **35A** is formed in a rectangular shape, while the absorbent material layer **35B** is formed of four separate parts, each two of them are lined in parallel in left and right. The absorbent material layer **35A** is mated with the absorbent material layer **35B** within the space provided by the four separate parts of the absorbent material layer **35B** to form a flat absorbent material layer.

[0099] In **Fig. 11**, the absorbent material layer **35A** is formed in a rectangular shape, while the absorbent material layer **35B** is formed of two separate absorbent material layers in a rectangular shape lined in parallel. The absorbent material layer **35A** is mated with the absorbent material layer **35B** within the space provided by the two separate rectangular parts of the absorbent material layer **35B** to form a flat absorbent material layer.

[0100] In **Fig. 12**, the absorbent material layer **35A** is formed in a rectangular shape, while the absorbent material layer **35B** is formed in a rectangular framework shape. The absorbent material layer **35A** is mated with the absorbent material layer **35B** within the space provided by the rectangular framework shape of the absorbent material layer **35B** to form a flat absorbent material layer.

[0101] In the flat absorbent material layer shown in **Fig. 10**, the absorbent material layer **35B** contains crushed pulps alone or the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP, and the absorbent material layer **35A** contains the mixture of crushed pulps and more and/or finer SAP than the absorbent material layer **35B**. The particle size of the SAP in the absorbent material layer **35A** is for instance less than 60 mesh or less, preferably less than 100 mesh, and the contents of the SAP in the absorbent material layer **35A** is 20% by weight or more, preferably 30% by weight or more and more preferably, in the range of 50%-90% by weight. In such structure, the excrement or secretion liquid is absorbed rapidly by the absorbent material layer **35A** placed at the central position and the volume of liquid retention at the absorbent material layer **35A** becomes large. Therefore, the spreading of the liquid to the direction of absorbent material layer **35B** is slowed and the leakage of the liquid to the side is prevented.

[0102] In the flat absorbent material layer shown in **Fig. 11**, the absorbent material layer **35A** contains crushed pulps alone or the mixture of crushed pulps and SAP, and the absorbent material layer **35B** contains the mixture of crushed pulps and more and/or finer SAP than the absorbent material layer **35A**. In such structure, since the liquid introduced to the absorbent material layer **35A** at the central position is moved to the absorbent material layer **35B** at the sides and dispersed, the liquid introduced to the absorbent material layer **35A** is pre-

vented from flowing back to the top sheet and from leaking outside.

[0103] The flat absorbent material layer shown in **Fig. 12** is a modification of the laminated layers composed of absorbent material layers **35** and **40** shown in **Fig. 7**, so that the excrement liquid introduced to the absorbent material layer **35A** is absorbed by the absorbent material layer **35B** formed in a rectangular framework shape.

[0104] Incidentally, although the carrier tissue **33** and the cover tissue **31** are used as the cover sheets in the production methods shown in **Fig. 1** and **Fig. 2**, and the cover tissues **31A** and **31B** are used as the cover sheets in the production method shown in **Fig. 3**, air permeable non-woven fabrics or woven fabrics can be used as the cover sheets to produce an absorbent body instead of using the tissues.

[0105] As has been described above, according to the production method of the absorbent body of the present invention, since the cover sheet is laid along the concavity of the pattern drum and the absorbent material layer is formed on this cover sheet, the absorbent material layer can be easily separated from the concavity of the pattern drum.

[0106] Further, according to the production method of the absorbent body of the present invention, since the particulate SAP is prevented from passing into the pattern drum through the mesh at the bottom of the concavity at the time of introducing the SAP into the absorbent material layer, the yield ratio of SAP at the production of the absorbent body can be improved. Also, it makes possible to introduce very fine SAP and increase the SAP content in the absorbent material layer, so that the liquid retention property and the liquid absorption speed of the absorbent body can be easily improved.

[0107] Furthermore, according to the production method of the absorbent body of the present invention, the absorbent material layers can be easily laminated to each other without providing tissues between the layers. Also, it makes possible to vary the shapes between the absorbent material layers and to mate the absorbent material layers with each other into a single-flat layer.

[0108] While in the foregoing specification the present invention has been described in relation to preferred embodiments and many details have been set forth for purpose of illustration, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention is susceptible to additional embodiments and that certain of the details described herein can be varied considerably without departing from the basic principles of the present invention.

[0109] As used herein, "comprises" and all its grammatical forms specifies the presence of stated features, integers, steps or components, but does not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, integers, steps, components or groups thereof.

Claims

1. A production method of an absorbent body comprising the following steps of:

supplying a first cover sheet on an outer surface of a rotating pattern drum, said pattern drum being provided with a concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof; adapting the first cover sheet to the shape of the concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the concavity to form an absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the concavity on the first cover sheet; supplying a second cover sheet toward the outer surface of the pattern drum; and separating the first cover sheet together with the absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the pattern drum and superposing the first cover sheet together with the absorbent material layer on the second cover sheet to produce an absorbent body comprised of the first cover sheet, the second cover sheet and the absorbent material layer interposed between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

2. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 1, wherein a bottom of the concavity is formed as a mesh, and a suction means is provided inside of the pattern drum for sucking air through the mesh to adapt the first cover sheet to the shape of the concavity and for sucking air through the mesh and the first cover sheet to form the absorbent material layer on the first cover sheet.

3. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 2, wherein a pressure means is provided inside of the pattern drum for pressuring air through the mesh to separate the first cover sheet together with the absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the pattern drum.

4. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 3, wherein the absorbent material layer comprises absorbent fibers and particulate super-absorbent polymers.

5. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 4, wherein the particle size of the super-absorbent polymers is 60 mesh or less.

6. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 4, wherein the content of the super-absorbent polymers in the absorbent material layer is in a range of 20%-90% by weight.

7. A production method of an absorbent body as de-

scribed in Claim 1, wherein another absorbent material layer is formed on the second cover sheet, and the absorbent material layer formed on the first cover sheet is superposed on the absorbent material layer formed on the second cover sheet, between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

8. A production method of an absorbent body comprising the following steps of:

supplying a first cover sheet on an outer surface of a first pattern drum rotating, said first pattern drum being provided with a first concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof;

adapting the first cover sheet to the shape of the first concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the first concavity to form a first absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the first concavity on the first cover sheet; supplying a second cover sheet on the outer surface of a second pattern drum rotating, said second pattern drum being provided with a second concavity formed in a predetermined shape on the outer surface thereof;

adapting the second cover sheet to the shape of the second concavity and supplying an absorbent material into the second concavity to form a second absorbent material layer adapted to the shape of the second concavity on the second cover sheet; and

separating the first cover sheet together with the first absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the first pattern drum and separating the second cover sheet together with the second absorbent material layer from the outer surface of the second pattern drum and superposing the first cover sheet together with the first absorbent material layer on the second cover sheet together with the second absorbent material layer to produce an absorbent body comprised of the first cover sheet, the second cover sheet and the first and second absorbent material layers interposed between the first cover sheet and the second cover sheet.

9. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 8, wherein each bottom of the first and second concavities is formed as a mesh, and first and second suction means are provided inside of the first and second pattern drums, respectively, for sucking air through the meshes to adapt the first and second cover sheets to the shapes of the first and second concavities and for sucking air through the meshes and the first and second cover sheets to form the first and second absorbent material layers on the first and second cover sheets.

10. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 9, wherein first and second pressure means are provided inside of the first and second pattern drums, respectively, for pressuring air through the meshes to separate the first and second cover sheets together with the first and second absorbent material layers from the outer surfaces of the first and second pattern drums. 5
11. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 10, wherein the first absorbent material layer comprises absorbent fibers alone or absorbent fibers and particulate super-absorbent polymers, and the second absorbent material layer comprises absorbent fibers and particulate super-absorbent polymers. 10 15
12. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 11, wherein the particle size of the super-absorbent polymers contained in the second absorbent material layer is smaller than that of the super-absorbent polymers contained in the first absorbent material layer. 20
13. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 12, wherein the particle size of the super-absorbent polymers contained in the second absorbent material layer is 60 mesh or less. 25
14. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 11, wherein the content of the super-absorbent polymers in the second absorbent material layer is higher than that of the super-absorbent polymers in the first absorbent material layer. 30 35
15. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 14, wherein the content of the super-absorbent polymers in the second absorbent material layer is in a range of 20%-90% by weight. 40
16. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 8, wherein the first absorbent material layer and the second absorbent material layer are superposed to each other. 45
17. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 16, wherein the first absorbent material layer and the second absorbent material layer are formed in an identical shape and have different absorption properties from each other. 50
18. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 16, wherein the first absorbent material layer and the second absorbent material layer are formed in different shapes. 55
19. A production method of an absorbent body as described in Claim 8, wherein the first absorbent material layer and the second absorbent material layer have different shapes and absorption properties from each other and are mated adjacent each other in a horizontal plane.

Fig. 1

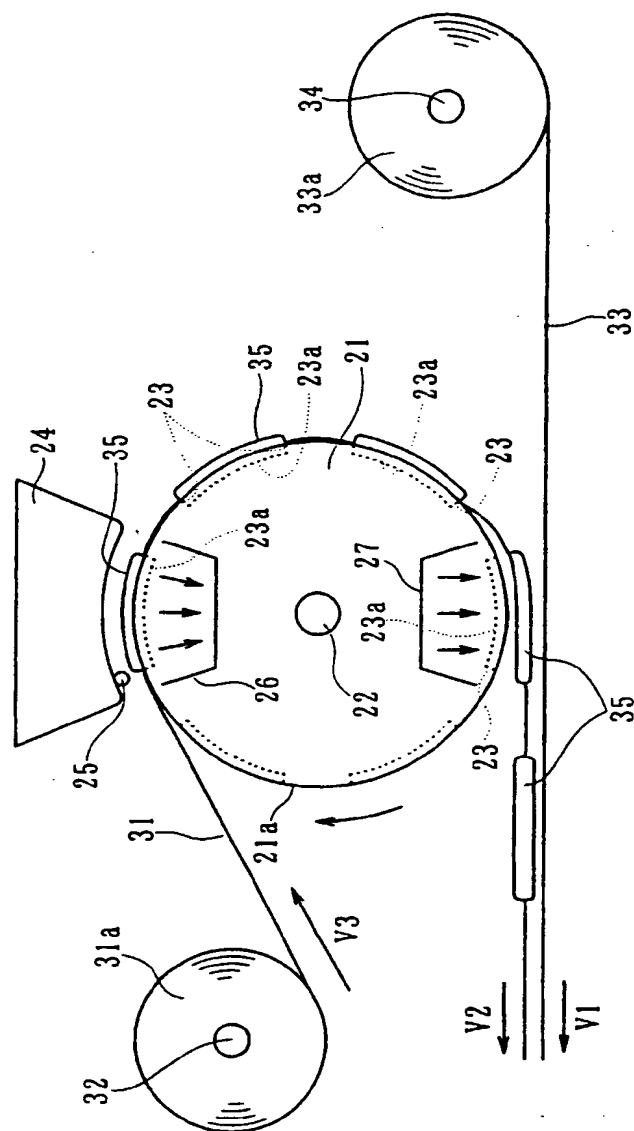


Fig. 2

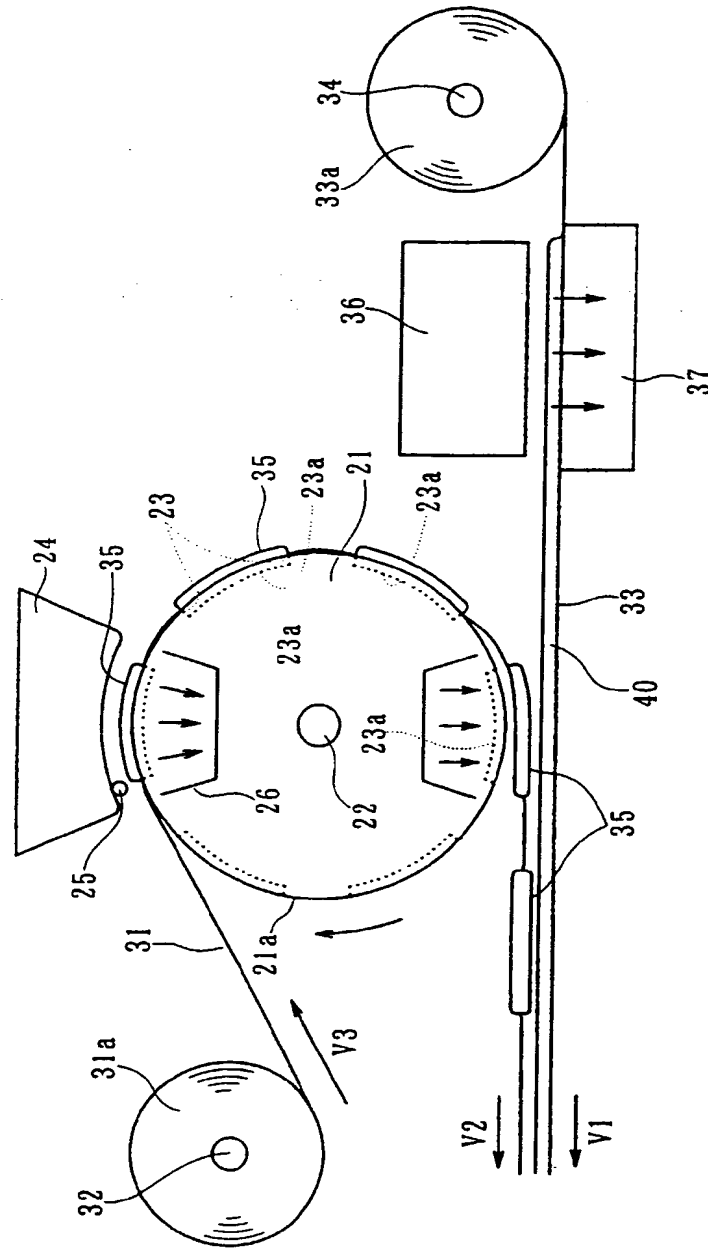


Fig. 3

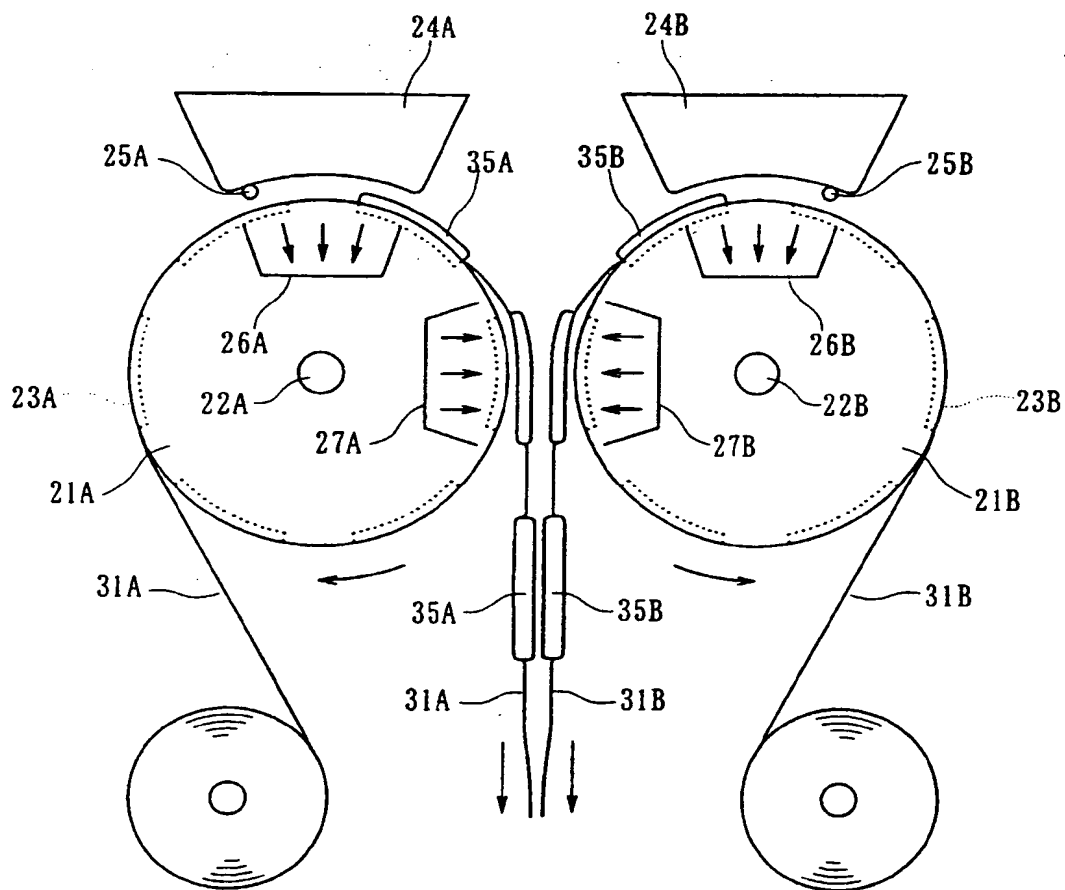


Fig. 4

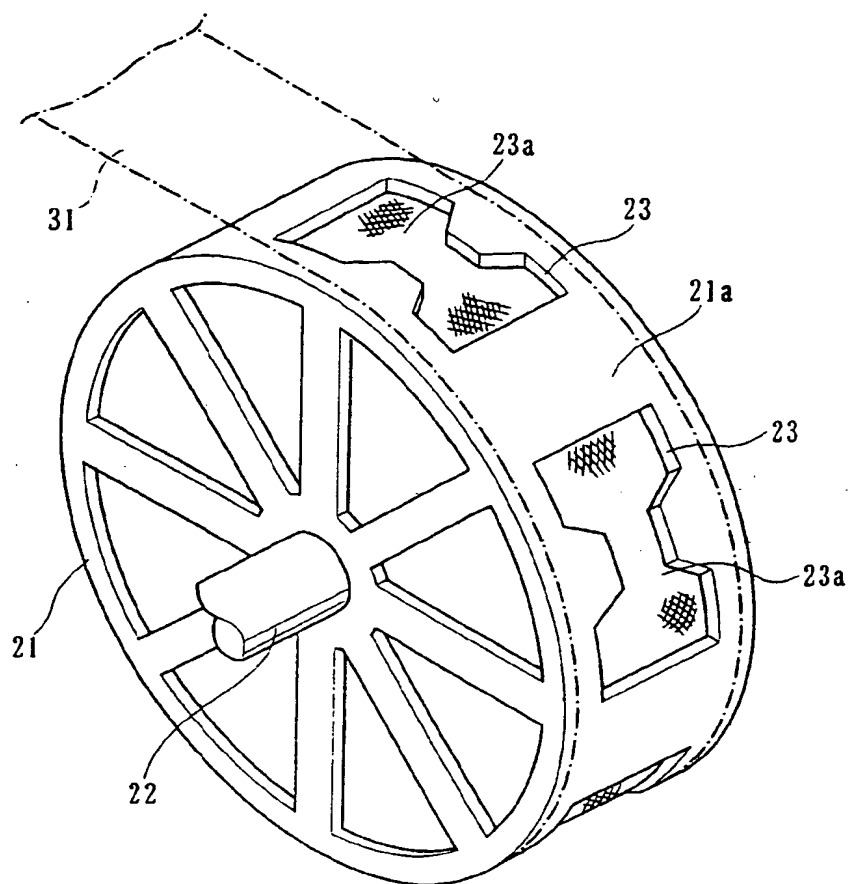


Fig. 5

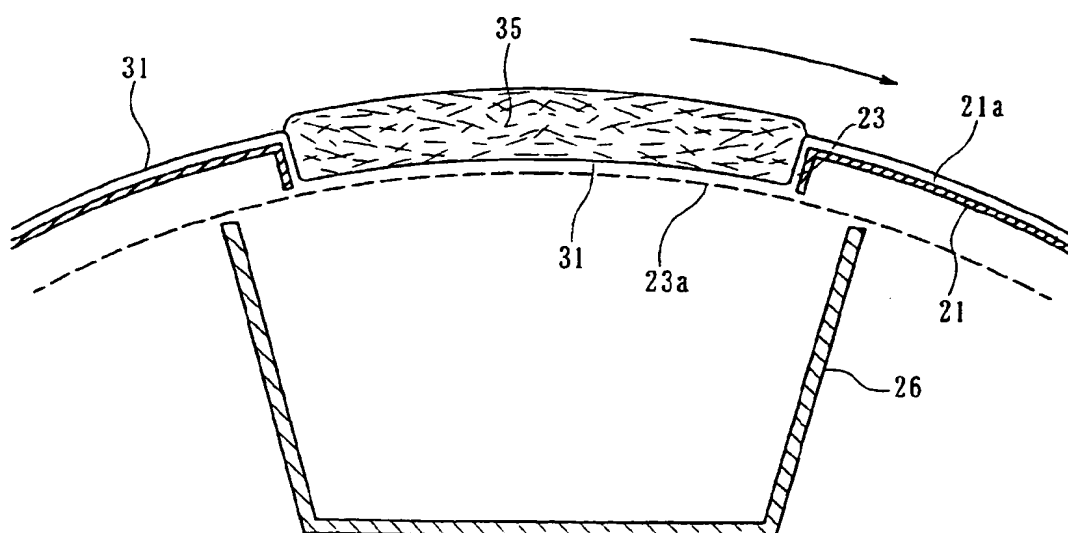


Fig. 6(A)

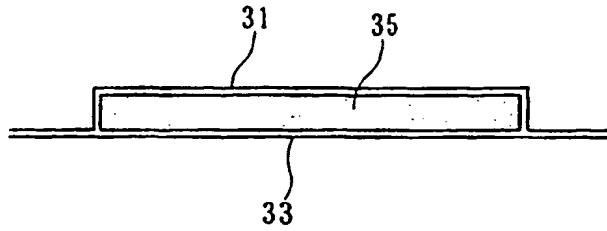


Fig. 6(B)

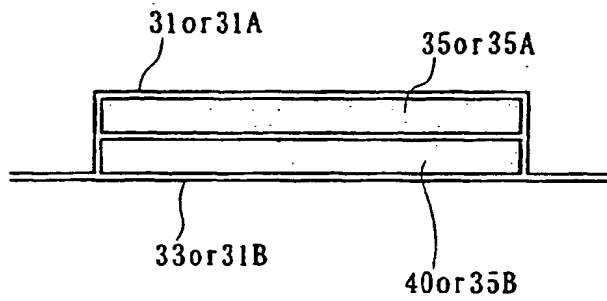


Fig. 6(C)

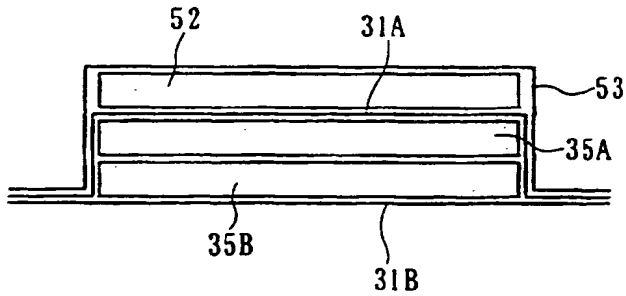


Fig. 6(D)

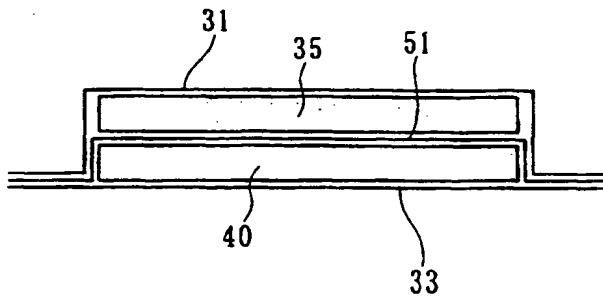


Fig. 7

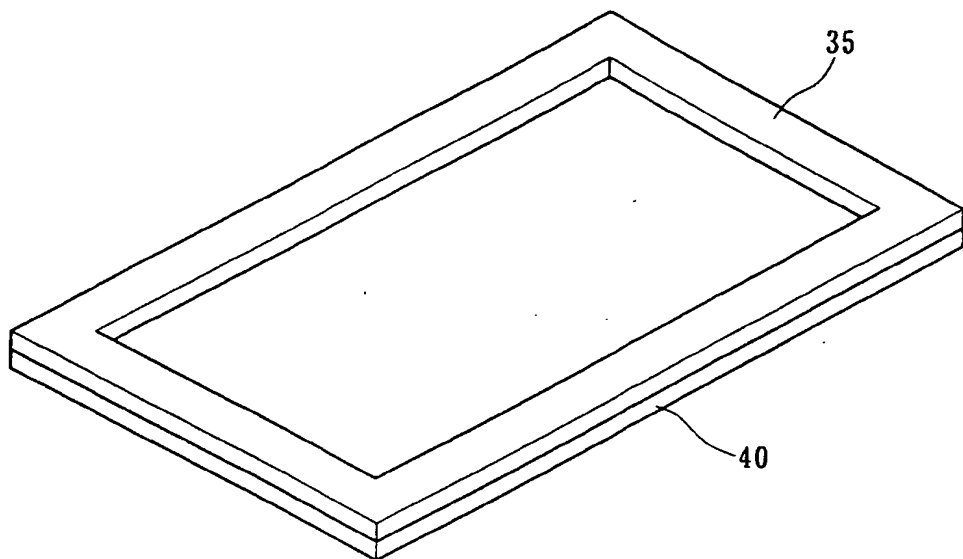


Fig. 8

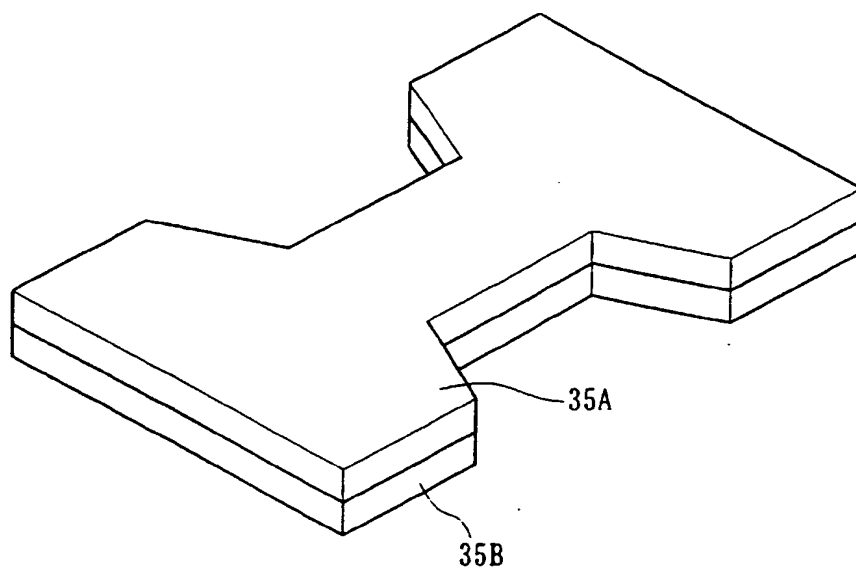


Fig. 9

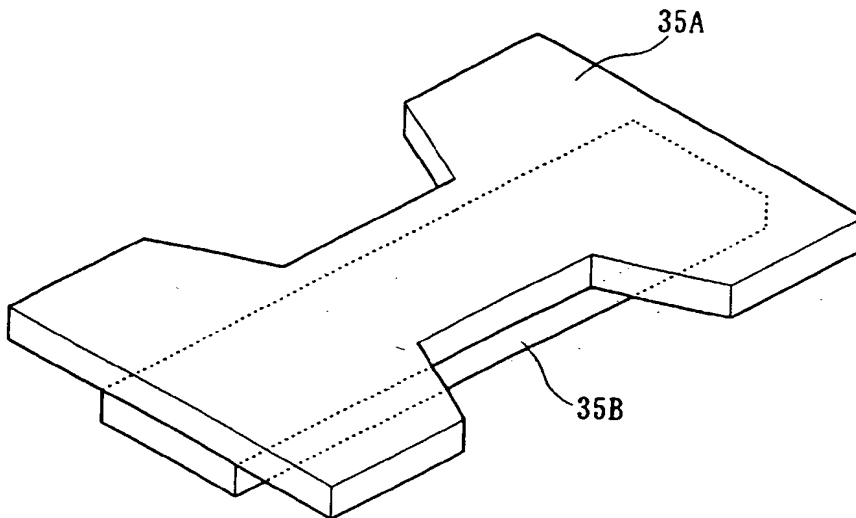


Fig. 10

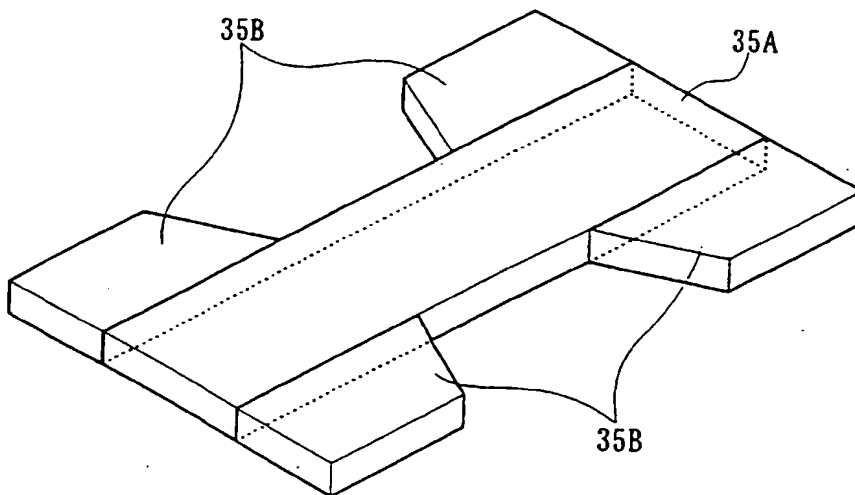


Fig. 11

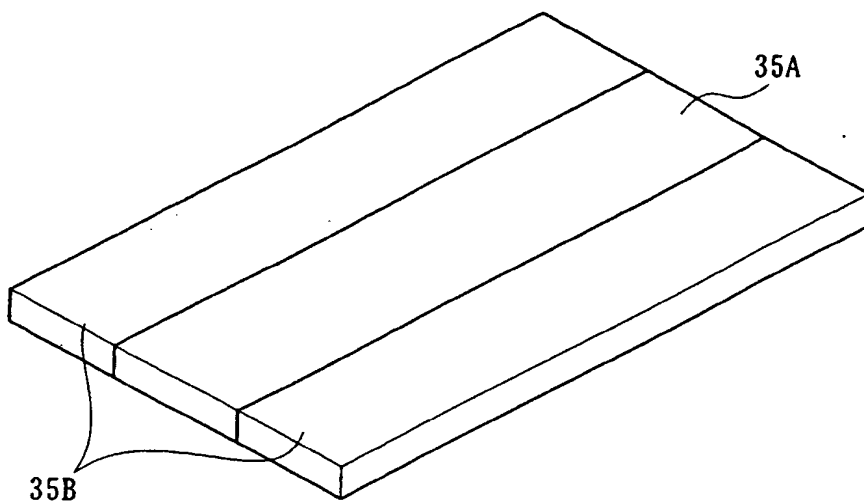


Fig. 12

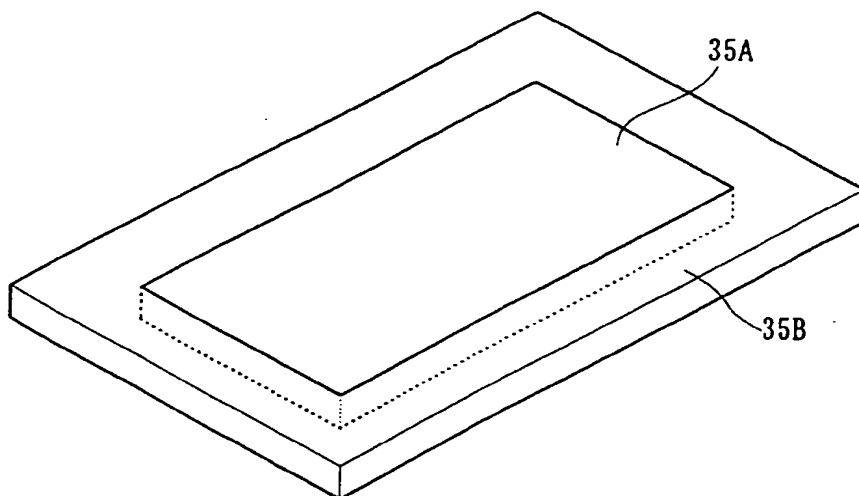


Fig. 13

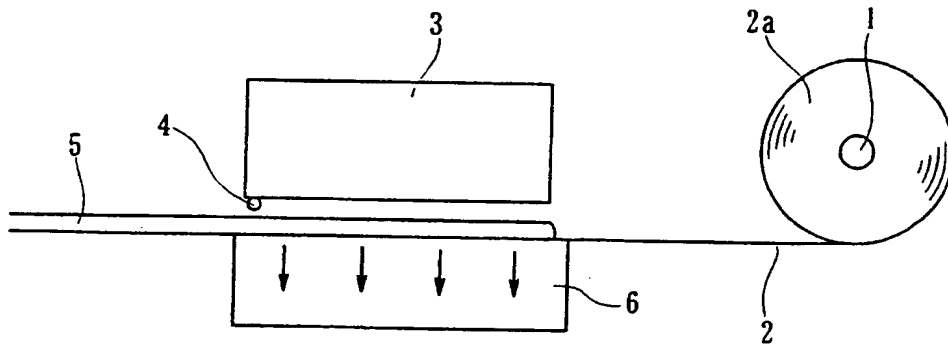
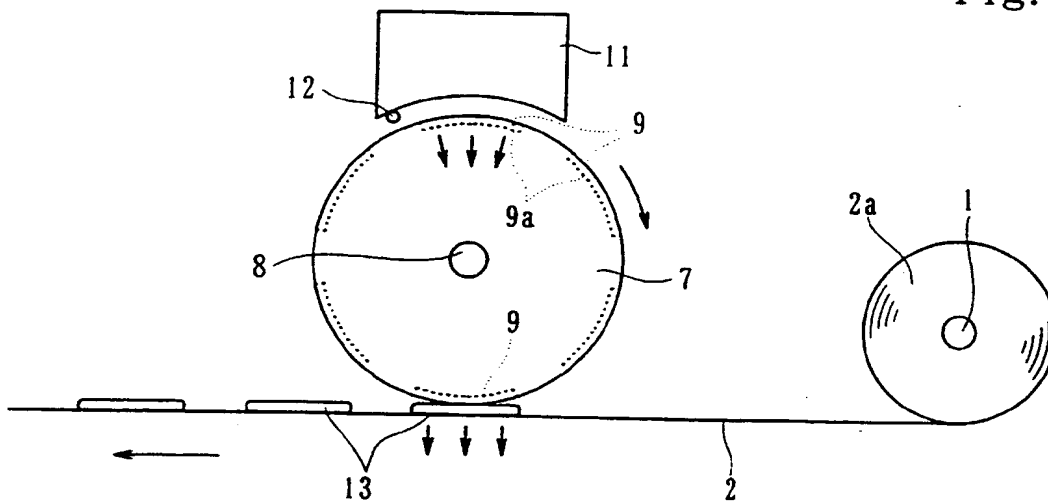


Fig. 14





European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 99 30 3652

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 19 August 1999	Examiner Soederberg, J
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